

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In response to the Official Action dated September 9, 2003, Applicants provisionally elect, with traverse, Species O, Fig. 18, and identify, Claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 19, 20, and 21 as readable on the elected invention and species. Applicants reserve the right to file one or more divisional applications directed to the non-elected inventions.

Claims 1-21 are presently pending in this case, Claim 21 having been added by the present amendment. Claim 21 finds clear support in original Claim 9, and no new matter has been added.

The Election Requirement asserts that the application contains claims to patentably distinct species. However, MPEP § 803 states the following:

If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions.

Although the outstanding Official Action does not identify search classifications, it is believed that the claims of the present application would have to be searched in only a handful of sub-classes. Furthermore, since electronic searching is commonly performed, a search may be made of a large number of, or theoretically all, subclasses without substantial additional effort. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully traverse the Election Requirement on the grounds that a search and examination of the entire application would not place a *serious* burden on the Examiner, whereas it would be a serious burden on Applicants to prosecute and maintain **EIGHTEEN** (Species A-Species R) separate applications.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the requirement to elect a single group be withdrawn, and that a full examination on the merits of Claims 1-21 be conducted.

Application No. 09/981,987

Reply to Office Action of September 9, 2003

Accordingly, examination on the merits is believed to be in order, and an early and favorable action on the elected claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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